What is special about AR compared to other forms of Augmented Space?

Let’s first of all look at the definition of the two terms. According to Lev Manovich’s The Poetics of Augmented Space, he describes AR as ‘the laying of dynamic and context-specific information over the visual field of a user.’ Augmented Reality is actually a term established around 1990, with a concept which is normally opposed to ‘virtual reality’, If we say that in the case of virtual reality, the user works on a virtual simulation, then in the case of Augmented Reality, the user works on actual things in an actual space. To be more specific, if a typical virtual simulation system presents a user with a virtual space that has nothing to do with that user’s immediate physical space, a typical augmented simulation system, in contrast, adds information that is directly related to the user’s immediate physical space.

And as for Augmented Space, he refers it to ‘all those physical spaces that are overlaid with dynamic information such as shopping malls and entertainment centers that are filled with electronic screens and all those places where one can access information wirelessly on phones, tablets or laptops.’

It is obvious that when we look at those ‘Augmented Space’ technologies, for example, video surveillance, ubiquitous computing, tangible interfaces ect and of course augmented reality, we could easily conclude that they all share same characteristic of overlaying the physical space with the dynamic data. However, Manovich adopts a unique angle to compare augmented reality and other technologies of augmented space that he deems design of an augmented space as an architectural problem. Those dynamic and contextual data then become the layers designated by ‘architects’ to overlay the built place (the architectture). Augmented Reality differs from other technologies as it can build up more realistic and vivid interaction between visual places and people in the real world. So the viewers would have a greater experience in contacting and feeling the existence of the space through multidimensional communication. In Lev Manovich’s article, he raise two examples. In his first example, the ‘audio walks’ of a Canadian artist Janet Cardiff successfully presents the aesthetic potential of laying new information over a physical space through dimensions of vision, hearing, and even present and past. She makes the virtual a powerful force to reshape the physical. In his second example, the Jewish Museum Berlin designed by the architect Daniel Libeskind also create multidimensional effects and help make the past cuts into the present. What they are more successful than other augmented space technologies lies in that they all make immaterialize layer materialize properly.

Just like other augmented space technologies, augmented reality actually has become one of the main stream of the future direction of development, in the near future, our life may be closely integrated with augmented reality techniques. We will be able to create our own ‘reality’ based on

our personal ideas, experience and imagination, the border between reality and virtuality may not be as distinct as it is in the past. I am looking forward to the coming of new era of the new world.